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Emerging Leaders

in the Creative Industry

Opinion

Michael I.F. Fong: Locating Macao's Own Music Culture

Extravaganza

The Rise of Hotel Art Expo

Brand Story

Revitalising Local Theatre Arts: Hiu Kok Drama Association

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Editor's Letter

Western countries have a rich history of art and already established a strong system of arts education to nurture talent. Grooming of new blood, therefore, is at the core of the development of the art and cultural industries. Although arts education in Macao is less developed, there are various subsidies available for local students to study abroad to hone their skills. This has supplemented what is lacking in our local arts education. The three interviewees in the Feature of this issue are recipients of such subsidies and they share with us their careers, and their views toward the industries.

In Opinion, musician Michael I.F. Fong talks about the possibility of local musics; and Hiu Kok Drama Association, a 41-year-old group that has been grooming local theatrical talent, takes the stage in Brand Story.

We also cover the first hotel art expo in Macao, and our seven bloggers continue to share with us their insights on various subjects.

C² Magazine Editorial Board

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and the interviewees, which do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao S.A.R. Government.



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Emerging Leaders in the Creative Industry

The success of the creative industry, more often than not, lies in its cultivation of talent. Appreciating this, the government in Macao and the community at large endeavour to come up with the best ways to nurture local talent, particularly via various funded learning programmes and scholarships. In this issue, we spoke with three emerging leaders from different arts fields to understand their career paths and their views towards the outlook of the industry.

By Jason Leong & Yuki leong
Photo courtesy of Old Sin@Calvan sin Production,
Titus Sky@In's Creation, Mok Sin Ting & Lei Ieng Wai

• (Left to right) Lau Chi Keung,
Lei Ieng Wai and Mok Sin Ting

Lau Chi Keung: The Mastery of Sound

Lau's passion for sound design and sound effects came from his experience of setting up a band with his friends when he was a high school student. He decided to pursue this as a profession, and successfully secured a place to study sound production at the SAE Institute Singapore. With school fees coming to MOP 300,000 a year, it was not an easy financial responsibility. Lau applied for funding from Macao Foundation yet the organisation could only support programmes from leading international institutions. In the end, Lau decided to take his friends' advice and wrote to the Cultural Affairs Bureau for funding. As a result, he secured a subsidy from the Bureau.

"At the beginning, my class had around 30 students. In the end, only seven of us graduated." The programme was intensive, and with substantial assignments and only 15 days of holidays each year, many students decided to quit the course. Towards the end of their course, they were even asked to hand in an essay on a weekly basis. Lau said: "To train our ear, our professor cleverly tuned up the frequency in the sound mixer, and so we sat there for four hours listening to the background noise of a TV being tuned."

In Singapore, foreign students are not allowed to take up work, yet this did not discourage Lau, who went on to seek opportunities, and he eventually went on to become the resident sound engineer for the Braddell Heights Symphony Orchestra in Singapore for a year. He also went to Taiwan to interview the sound engineer for the Taiwan Symphony Orchestra. These experiences gave him extensive insights and enriched his thesis. Moreover, they also helped him to gain recognition within the field.

Since Chinese is spoken widely in Singapore, Lau is often taken as a local when he went for internship interviews. However, they soon realised that he is not a native. "I don't think

that the students are much different when it comes to their learning ability and work performance. The only disadvantage, coming from Macao, is that my English speaking ability is less competitive than the locals." Despite the drawback in terms of English fluency, Lau has a strong will to learn and an indefatigable spirit. "There was a student from Mauritius, and I was very curious to know why he would come all the way to learn sound production. Apparently, there is a lack of sound professionals in his country, and so he has decided to study this subject. Upon his return to his home country, he set up a company and initiated projects with leading artists."

During his residency, various opportunities such as quartet performances, choral performances, documentary soundtrack, broadened his portfolio. In Macao, sound effects professionals are only needed when there are large-scale concerts and festivals. In Singapore, however, Lau found out that their orchestras have high expectations on the perfection of sound, an attitude for which he much respected.

"The key difference in the music environments between Macao and Singapore lies in the fact that Macao's orchestras value performance opportunities more than studio recordings, while in Singapore, even small concerts will have professional recordings."

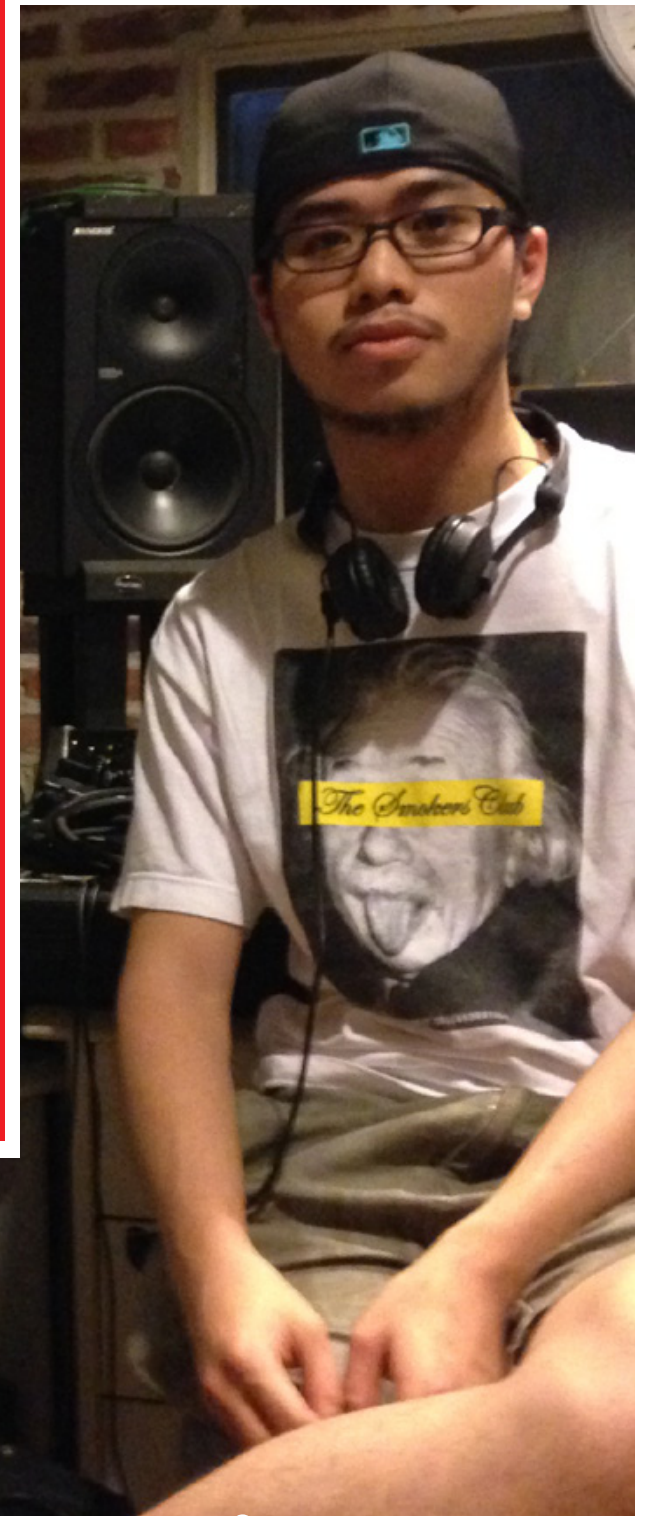
Singapore's leading music academies have offered music recording programmes for a long time. The director for the award-winning movie, *Ilo Ilo*, is an alumnus at Ngee Ann Polytechnic which funded the film shoot. This showed how the local government cared for and promoted cultural and creative arts on a national scale. Lau quoted from the Singaporeans: "You only need to look at the schools and programmes established at the National University of Singapore, you will understand the government's policy."

With an established arts scene, graduates

could seek advancement in the field once they took up jobs in their arts streams. Lau felt that in comparison, Macao's creative industry is still in its early stage. While this means the potential for growth where creative practices are involved, the downside is that artists must be proactive in seeking out opportunities. "When I first joined the industry, I gained many insights from interviewing veteran practitioners. Our local film boom operators, lighting professionals and photographers do not offer internships. So the question is how do you seek advancement once you have reached a certain level of proficiency?"

According to the provisions of the subsidy application rules, it requires recipients to return to work in Macao for at least two years within five years after they graduate from their programmes. Lau originally wanted to apply for gaming companies, but his schoolmate reminded him: "You might find your talent stifled in big corporations. It's by far better to venture abroad and to perfect your craft first." Subsequently, Lau gained the attention of some local filmmakers, and so he was given the roles of sound recording and film scoring for the film *Macao Stories 3: City Maze*.

On his return to Macao, Lau mainly worked in film recordings, sound production and soundtrack making. His plan is to find time to do some further studies. Smiling, he said that in recent years when he travelled to the Mainland, he had the privilege of meeting peers of remarkable talent. "When I was doing sound production, I came across an assistant who used to work as a sound-making intern. As they talked, he realised how these young interns might know much more than he did. The Mainland has a flourishing arts scene. Even for an intern, the opportunities to learn are vast, since you'd be dealing with such a diversity of film genres. This meant more jobs for us. I have to recognise that I am nothing but a grain of sand. In fact, this has kept me motivated."



Diversifying Macao's Drama Arts



Heading Macao's theatre group Comuna de Pedra, Mok Sin Ting has won a number of international awards in the Galway Fringe Festival with her physical theatre piece, *The Mute Squire*. However, despite her international reputation, Mok's works can only attract a small local audience given the lack of those who appreciate this art form. Seeing the potential for expansion of the market, Mok decided to stay in Macao so that she can make a difference in diversifying the theatre arts in Macao.

Mok was first introduced to the theatre when she finished high school. She was a form five student when she went to see a show by Comuna de Pedra at the Festival Fringe, and was deeply attracted to it. "I remember quite distinctly that the show performed was called *Shiyiji*. It was performed at the waterfall outside the Cultural Centre. The acting was quite dramatic, even if there was not much of a dialogue. Back then, I did not know much about the theatre, and could not decipher much of it. However, it left a strong impression on me."

Spurred on by her curiosity, Mok decided to volunteer for this theatre, helping with their backstage work. "I was a naive 17-year-old back then who did not know much about dance and drama. However I made it up by rehearsing more, and I felt wonderful the day I first performed onstage. The journey has helped me to choose

drama as my vocation."

Later, Mok studied English literature at the University of Macau. During her leisure time, she would devote her time to drama. Her craft is therefore informed by her literary studies. After her graduation, Mok directed plays to share her world-views through her work. "I have produced a play called *A Moment of Sunshine in Pinkish Orange*, which is based on the story of a clown and his relationship with loneliness. Of course, that was an early piece of my work. But it has probably brought me to where I am: a freelance theatre director."

With time, Mok gained considerable experience in directing and acting, even though she did not undergo extensive formal training. Eventually it prompted her to address this lack in her creative practice. Mok decided to embark on further studies. "At that time, I considered drama schools in different regions, but since most institutions in Asia rely rather heavily on text-based learning, in the end I decided to study in Europe, hoping that it would encourage my creativity."

Mok went on to study at a leading drama school in Belgium, the International School of Theatre LASSAAD. Given the considerable school fees, Mok applied for the Cultural Affairs Bureau's Subsidy Programme for Learning Art and Culture, and successfully obtained a funding to fulfil her dream. In 2012, she left for Europe.

Once she began, she realised that the learning environment was very competitive. There was a selection exam three months after enrolment, and

those who could not pass this exam would have to leave. Moreover, since classes were taught in French, Mok felt that learning was quite stressful. "I was the only Asian student there, and since my French was quite rusty, it was difficult. In the end, only 26 of us managed to graduate in a class of 40." Luckily, Mok's creative work is not language-oriented, and her creativity was soon recognised and appreciated by the lecturers there.

The two years of weekly classes provided rigorous training for Mok, helping her to become more mature in her techniques and thinking. After her graduation, Mok returned to Comuna de Pedra, where she took up the role of director, and committed herself to promoting the art of physical theatre in Macao.

Mok became most excited when we talked about physical theatre, and explained to us the meaning of the piece she recently directed: "Earlier, I directed a play at the theatre called *A Perfect Day*. In the past, I used to teach drama in special needs schools, and that experience prompted me to think about the life of autistic patients and the meaning of reality. Most autistic patients are unable to differentiate their sensory experiences in the way we do. They are similar to us in their sensory perception. However, we often assume that the world the autistic patients live in are unrealistic. In fact, how far are our perception realistic? Or do we merely take comfort in being the majority? My reflections prompted me to come up with this piece."

To represent such a concept, Mok's play began with an opening scene of flickering light, which conjured a spectacle of photographic vision with repetitive motions. This is a metaphor to illustrate what is seen is uncertain. Such a technique is quite uncommonly found in typical narratives.

"The local audience tends to be more rational and look for logical answers in narratives and characterisation. In fact, most artistic works are not conceived this way, yet they have a profound meaning and can generate a lasting impression." Artistic works are often emotions-led, and with this in mind, Mok is keen to pursue her theatrical creations, and to encourage more people to appreciate physical theatre.



• Physical theatrical works by Mok Sin Ting



Lei leng Wai: Painting Macao

Born in Macao in the 1980s, the painter, Lei leng Wai, is an active artist in Macao as well as Greater China. Graduating from the master programme of the painting division of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Lei has gained much reputation for his works. To reflect the glamour and indulgence that permeated the gambling industry in Macao, Lei uses luminous shades to highlight and register the social reality.

Lei's studio is located on the mezzanine floor of an old-fashioned *tong lau* building. Triangular-shaped, the studio does not have much furniture, only a sofa, a coffee table and some painting tools. A blown-up poster of the Hong Kong singer Tse On Kei, is displayed casually on a prominent spot in harmony with the other objects in the studio.

Lei has a spontaneous working style. He would teach students from Friday to Sunday. Most of his students came from word of mouth. During office hours, he would teach art history in high schools, and the rest of his time he would either paint or rest. "When is my personal time? I am painting even in my resting time. It is inseparable from my everyday life," Lei said.

With his own studio and a career that is taking off, this path is the fruit of years of labour. He was born to a family of artists, and so art has come naturally to him, and he learnt to make art with crayons, watercolour and gouache, but his passion lies in the discovery of oil paintings.

"I find crayons too bright and watercolour too light for me. Oil paintings are more optimal for my expression, and I am more familiar with oil painting techniques. But to speak the truth, these are just materials. The real thing is what the artist seeks to express," Lei explained.

Nonetheless, when he was a student, Lei never thought of becoming a professional artist, seeing art more as a pastime. Because he did not achieve well in his studies, Lei at first joined the IT sector, making a living from assembling desktops, and later worked in the logistics, and switched to work in the arts with the introduction of the local artist Wong Ka Long, after he graduated from high school. He decided to apply for the painting stream at the leading arts college in China, the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, which became a significant step for his career.

"At that time, I only knew that I love painting. I am not good in my studies and foreign languages, and back then in Macao there is no subject that focuses purely on art-making, so I chose that painting programme, where I could draw and paint all day," Lei explained.

When he first joined the academy, he was not familiar with the environment and the people there. Lei realised that the arts training on the Mainland is quite different from that in Hong Kong and Macao: it focuses more on the technical side and apprenticeship of the craft, rather than the creative thinking.

"I remember that there are assignments each week, and so each day it's mainly just about working on the art assignments or sleeping, leaving little room for creativity. There are pros and cons to it. When there is inspiration, there is the need for techniques to render the inspiration."

Once he graduated in 2008, Lei returned to Macao to continue his art career. In this period, his works gained the attention of major galleries in Macao, and secured the scholarship from Art For All Society

to support him to complete a Master's degree in oil painting in Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 2010, which helped him to further his artistic practice.

"Back then, a Master's programme takes three years. In the first year, we learn the anatomy and drawing of the human body. In the next two years, there is plenty of time for creative work. I was able to make use of the techniques learnt during my first degree to make new work."

After completing his Master's programme, Lei went on to set up his own studio, becoming a full-time artist, making work and teaching. "I enjoy painting, but I know that in order to sustain my passion, I have to have a reliable source of income, and so I get into teaching. Luckily, Macao is a small city, and so I can teach in the morning and return to my studio in the afternoon to make my own work, as it's only a ten-minute ride between the two places. It is this convenience that makes me stay in Macao. Moreover, now that Macao is becoming a more global city, my work can be featured in Greater China and even internationally. So there is not much difference where I am based, as long as I can continue to produce good work," Lei said.

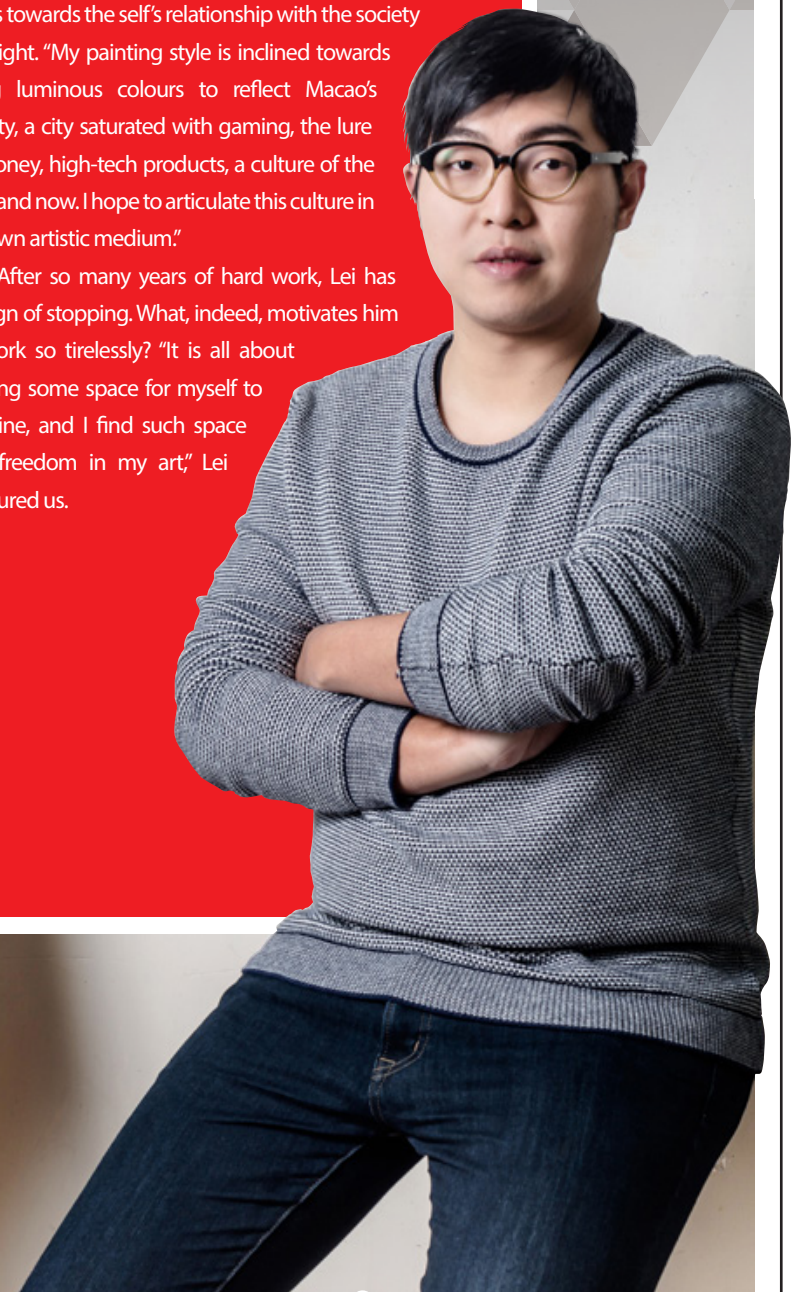
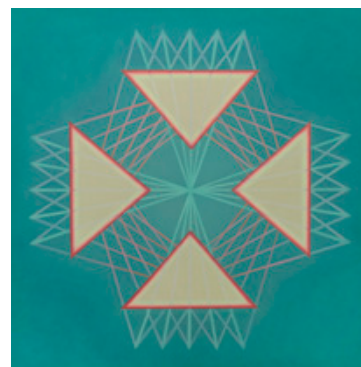
When he was a student, Lei would go on field trips, painting the landscapes. He loves Nature, and soon he discovered that for him the joy of painting the landscape lies in manoeuvring the shades of light instead. This pointed towards a new direction for his work. "I felt that light is a very special concept and can represent the time we live in. Nowadays everyone is staying at home with a digital screen, and even during this interview, there is a lot of intense light being projected onto us. We live our lives in the manipulation of light."

In 2011, Lei put on his own solo exhibition. Entitled *Sympathetic*, it explored the relationships generated from the intersection of light in spaces. Later on, his series entitled *Echo* engaged with the reflection of light that generates space. In recent years, he departed from his earlier theme, and focuses more on using dot, line and plane to depict a 3D postmodern era, revealing his views towards the self's relationship with the society and light. "My painting style is inclined towards using luminous colours to reflect Macao's society, a city saturated with gaming, the lure of money, high-tech products, a culture of the here and now. I hope to articulate this culture in my own artistic medium."

After so many years of hard work, Lei has no sign of stopping. What, indeed, motivates him to work so tirelessly? "It is all about making some space for myself to imagine, and I find such space and freedom in my art," Lei reassured us.



• Artwork by Lei leng Wai



Vocanimals Music Co. Ltd. is the first professional music production house in Macao. Its executive director, Michael I.F. Fong, divides his time between Hong Kong and Macao, and has written many popular songs including Eason Chan's *Peace Hotel*, Jun Kung's *Dum Da D Dum* and Aaron Kwok's *Luck*. While Fong is pleased to see the rise of the music industry in Macao, he also remarked that support for the industry and quality of the music output, have room for improvement. He pointed out that, in order to promote the development of Macao's music industry, it is vital to discover the uniqueness of its homegrown music.

Michael I.F. Fong:

Locating Macao's Own Music Culture

By Jason Leong
Photo courtesy of
Old Sin@ Calvin sin Production



• Macao musician Michael I.F. Fong



Born and raised in Macao, Fong set up a band with his classmates when he studied at Yuet Wah College, taking up the role of the keyboardist. After he graduated, Fong went on to work as a freelance music producer. "That's how it used to be in the 1990s. We used to divide our time between our day jobs and our after-work hobbies. I was in the same team as Jun Kung and Solar. It seems as if we are the only ones left to pursue music," said Fong.

With the recommendation from Kung, Fong moved to Hong Kong to further his music career. His work is wide-ranging, from music production, music publishing, to signing up artists and HR training. With his extensive experience in the field, Fong went on to set up the first professional music production company in Macao in 2003. His company offers a one-stop solution for training artists, publications and multimedia production. "In Hong Kong, I have met many professionals and learnt more about the trade. There is a lack of such companies in Macao, so I feel that it is an opportunity worth exploring." Later, Fong took up the producer role at Warner Music (HK) Limited, and continued to divide his time between the two cities, engaging in both music production as well as composition.

Having worked in Macao for so many years, Fong has produced a considerable portfolio, including the first Cantopop album in Macao entitled *Casimiro de Jesus Pinto*; the solo album *Rua de Felicidade* by Portuguese singer João Gomes, and the special album *Macao in the New Epoch* to mark the handover of Macao in 1999. Fong felt that much needs to be done to spur the growth of Macao's music market. "I asked my friends whether they'd listen to local songs, and they teased me saying that they know they are listening to local songs because the quality of those songs is bad. It's a joke of course, but I am also sad about it. I think that this is a challenge that Macao's music industry has to tackle."

Fong explained: "the music market in Macao is not very integrated. Because it is rather divided and lacks cohesion, the quality of work is not sustained. Actually, there are lots of people who make music here, but the majority lacks quality, and gives the international audience as well as music production houses an impression that our music is amateurish." He felt that there must be a more cohesive scene and better quality control on the music output, in order for Macao's music scene to flourish.

With a small population, Macao has

only a limited local market. Fong observed that this has made it more difficult to sustain its own music scene, as compared with places like Hong Kong. "Many people said that the gaming sector in Macao has led to a thriving economy, which in turn spurs the growth of the music market. While I agree that this may be helpful to a certain extent, I don't think it is enough. After all, those entertainment programmes

at the casinos are merely based on the US entertainment model, and lack the local elements." Fong pointed out that the insufficient sales have prevented international entertainment companies from setting up offices in Macao. Without international talent, it is difficult for the locals to gain more experience. This in turn leads to a vicious cycle and hampers the development of the music market.

"What's more, the lack of diversity in Macao's media means that good music does not get promoted enough, and limits the opportunities to showcase our local music," Fong said.

Despite the drawbacks, he felt that breakthrough is possible, as long as the local music market differentiates itself by its unique local attributes.

"Many people said that Hong Kong's music is just karaoke music, but indeed, many of the Hong Kong pop songs are adapted from Japanese songs. Do they become Hong Kong songs simply by adopting Cantonese lyrics? Obviously not. Culture is not a straightforward equation. Hong Kong music is recognisable because there is a certain unique quality about it. This helps them with their market positioning and to amass sales internationally."

According to Fong, while the demographics and political circumstances for Hong Kong and Macao are quite different, there are commonalities between the two cities in terms of culture, language and the communities. It is common to see that certain cultural trends in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia take several decades to be firmly established. Macao is no exception either. "However, if we are still aiming to replicate the karaoke song culture of our neighbouring city, then we will have no hope of creating our own image," Fong said.

"It is vital for us to ensure the interplay of art, commerce and culture so as to encourage creativity. These elements are still evolving in Macao, and while we can already see some progress, there is plenty of room to develop the market further."



As early as January this year, POLY Auction Macao Limited (POLY) and Chiu Ying Culture Co. Ltd. (Chiu Ying) co-organised a series of art exhibitions and art auctions in Macao to promote exchange among artists and art collectors, offering showcasing and learning opportunities for local artists.

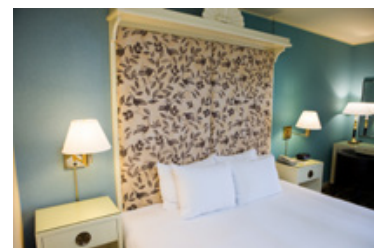
Held in Regency Hotel Macau in Taipa, the "6075 POLY Macau Hotel Art Fair" is one of its kind to exhibit art in a hotel setting, a trend that has taken place in neighbouring regions. As many as 60 artists were allocated a hotel room, which became a solo exhibition space for them to showcase their work to collectors and general public. Ho Chiu Ying Sabrina, director of POLY Auction Macao Limited and founder of Chiu Ying Culture Co. Ltd., said she is satisfied with the sales.



The Rise of Hotel Art Expo



By Jason Leong
Photo courtesy of Samsam@Sam's images & Chiu Ying Culture Co. Ltd



collectors think and to understand the market trends. This will help them to grasp the latest happenings in Asia as well as internationally."

Participating artists are supportive of the project. Wong Sui Lun, for example, said: "The idea of using a hotel room to showcase our works makes it very interactive. It also creates a harmonious atmosphere among the artists." Another artist, Pakeong, pointed out: "In this expo, there is a Macao-themed showcase, which aims to reveal the strength and profile of Macao's local artworks. I find this initiative helpful to boost the confidence of Macao's homegrown artists." He also mentioned that he has successfully sold over half of his works at the expo, making it his most profitable recent art exhibition. Both artists are keen to take part in similar art expos in the future.

All of the artists taking part in this event were born after 1975. Ho said: "In Macao, there are few opportunities like this to give a platform for young artists to articulate and to learn from abroad. This innovative style of art expo can generate a direct dialogue between the art audience and the artists, so that the artists can find out about what the

Participants of the Young Artists: A Development Forum for Young Artists from the Mainland, Taiwan and Macao.



Other than "6075 POLY Macau Hotel Art Fair", Chiu Ying and POLY also organised "POLY Macau Inaugural Art Auction" in January, where about 150 expensive artworks from all over the world were auctioned, attracting a number of important art collectors in Asia. The auctioned amount exceeded HK\$245,000,000. In the pre-auction show, the artworks were also exhibited for public enjoyment and appreciation.

During the same period, Chiu Ying also convened a Young Artists: A Development Forum for Young Artists from the Mainland, Taiwan and Macao, an event where young artists and professional scholars from these three regions met to discuss the future development and prospects of young artists. Ho pointed out: "Owing to a lack of time, there is room for improvement and fine-tuning for this recent series of activities. We hope that these activities can broaden the opportunities for cultural exchange within the art-loving community."

The scene of the "6075 POLY Macau Hotel Art Fair"



Ho Chiu Ying Sabrina, director of POLY Auction Macao Limited and founder of Chiu Ying Culture Co. Ltd., is satisfied with the auction and exhibition sales.



Chiu Ying, the organiser of these art activities, is an arts organisation set up in October 2015, with a mission to promote commerce-focused art events such as art auctions, art expos and arts consultancy. Its founder said: "I think that we should not leave art development to the government. After all, the community can come up with lots of ways to make the art scene in Macao much more interesting. What we are trying to do is to use commercial means to promote the cultural arts in Macao. The art auction and expo this time have achieved great success, and help to prove that the local artists can find their audience if there are good opportunities. After all, it is important for those who create art to find an appreciative market or audience. Our next step would be to organise an art show for the fine art and design graduates in Macao."

As a fine art graduate herself, Ho explained: "In Europe and the US, these graduate art shows are very important events to help these young artists locate an audience. Many art gallery owners and curators will come to these shows to spot the emerging talent. We hope that our connections can help us organise these activities in Macao, so that we can help the local art graduates find their audience."

Revitalising Local Theatre Arts:

Hiu Kok

Drama
Association



"Our mission when setting up Hiu Kok Drama Association is to promote quality work and unity in the local scene, and to advocate the development of theatre arts," said Lawrence Lei, Permanent Honorary Arts Director of Hiu Kok Drama Association. "Quality work is one of our priorities, while unity indicates our willingness to commit ourselves even without funding, in order to promote theatre activities in Macao."

By Yuki leong

Photo courtesy of old sin@Calvan sin Production & Hiu Kok Drama Association

Back in the 1970s, there were very few active theatre groups in Macao, which meant that theatre performances were mainly restricted to drama plays at schools. In 1975, Lawrence Lei and Yu Meng Sang set up Hiu Kok Theatre, in an effort to raise more awareness for theatre arts. Over the past two decades, Hiu Kok has become an influential tour-de-force in advocating original drama scripts and live theatre shows, offering more performance and profile-building opportunities for actors.

"At that time, many people have only watched performances in make-shift theatre stalls, and during those performances it was quite common for people to go in and out of the performance venue. We, however, wanted to promote the theatre as a respectable space, where the audience attend and watch the performance with few distractions."

By 1980s, Hiu Kok has amassed a team of 80 members, and is dedicated to promoting theatre plays, radio plays and publishing magazines on performance arts. With the gradual development of the theatre group, Hiu Kok's productions were staged abroad as well as locally, and the international exchanges and tours helped to raise the profile of Macao's theatre scene. From 1986 onwards, Hiu Kok's shows went on tour in Hong Kong, and have since then won many awards.

With more new theatre groups and emerging actors in Macao's arts scene, Hiu Kok took the lead in offering resources to support local theatre groups, such as securing vacant spaces in former industrial buildings for local groups to run rehearsals and performances. In

essence, Hiu Kok is creating Macao's first community-led theatre venues. "Before the handover, Macao did not even have a cultural centre of its own, and so performance venues were confined to Macau Forum and Cinema Alegria, but since the cinema is in operation in the daytime, we could only wait until the evening before the designated shows to set up the venue properly. This meant setting up the stage and equipments overnight." Lei remarked that nowadays, Hiu Kok plays a more active role in supporting new directors and in expanding the market for theatre performances, helping to improve and revitalise the local arts scene.

As far as the local theatre scene is concerned, a typical theatre production at Macao Cultural Centre would have three performance runs, and seldom exceed four shows. Since 2013, Hiu Kok has piloted the Long Run Theatre project in order to expand outlets. "Currently, the theatre audience is largely comprised of theatre professionals, and only very few non-professionals are interested in attending the shows. Therefore, we should do more to broaden the clientele in Macao." Lei pointed out that, given the considerable investment required for each theatre production, a longer performance run is beneficial not just for the actors, but will raise the profile of the show itself as well as bring in more audience. Long Run project is conceived to address this need.

Up until now, Hiu Kok has successfully launched five productions. This year, it will continue to bring out two more similar productions. The association's executive director, Andy Lou, admitted that it is a bold decision to do so. He has confidence that, if Long Run Theatre project takes off smoothly, it will

bring more opportunities to theatre practitioners in the long run. "From what we observe, based on an audience of 150 persons for a small theatre production, and supposing that tickets are priced at MOP\$200 each, ten performances in the Long Run Theatre would already be able to lead to a break-even. However, it is always a challenge to attract the audience as well as to charge a higher ticket price." In the future, there are plans for Hiu Kok to collaborate with other groups in neighbouring regions, and to bring the Long Run Theatre project to Hong Kong and the Mainland. Lou considered that Long Run Theatre is a strategic move to gauge the market and the potential of the actors. Looking ahead, more work will be done to promote outstanding actors, so as to enhance the credibility of performances.

Well-known within the local market, Hiu Kok is also known for its bold initiatives. For example, its core members are practitioners who are relatively new to the arts scene. Lou said that Hiu Kok has put in a lot of resources to train their actors, scriptwriters, directors and production teams, so as to increase opportunities for young members. At the same time, the company is keen to retain talent. "A theatre professional relies heavily on performance opportunities to build his or her career. In the past two years, we have stepped up our performance runs, so that new talent can showcase their work. While the government provides us with the resources, the theatre group has a mission to offer performance outlets." Lou also said that the show *City of Fame*, which has enjoyed favourable reviews, has relied on a production team of relatively young practitioners, while the show featured veteran actors onstage. Although it is not easy to bring together

young talent and veteran actors, he believed that it is a far more sustainable way to promote theatre. Lou hoped that the government would do more to foster training and recognition of theatre practitioners.

When asked whether the government has done enough to support local groups, Lou said that it has been a helpful move for the government to provide performance venues by releasing the site of the Old Court Building. "The Old Court Building is an accessible location and attracts tourists and local people to attend performances. Based on our own survey, a show staged there can command 18% to 20% of non-regular theatre-goers, as compared with 15% for shows in other venues. This shows that the location has the potential to attract a new theatre audience."

With four decades of experience in running Hiu Kok, Lei has confidence in the development of local theatre arts. Quality scripts, stage acting and production skills are fundamental in promoting the industry. "We have locally a pool of full-time practitioners. Our aim is to open up a positive, enhancing environment for them, so that they do not rely solely on government funding, and instead cultivate a more self-sustainable platform for themselves."

• Still images for *City of Fame*



EVENT CALENDER

Huashan Academy

Date: 9/3/2016-31/12/2016

Time: 9am-10pm, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, starting from 18/3/2016 (each class lasts one to two hours)

Venue: Huashan 1914 Creative Park

Fee: Please refer to the course details

Details: Various courses related to performing arts are included in this new series of courses offered by Huashan Academy, including dance course for children and contemporary dance for adults. Not to be missed is the newly designed ballet course for adults that re-defines the concept of beauty.

Organiser: Taipei University of the Arts

Web: aaa.tnua.edu.tw

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The 10th Chinese Drama Festival (Hong Kong, 2016)

Date: 1/4/2016-18/4/2016

Venue: Various

Details: The theme of this year's Chinese Drama Festival is the relation between Chinese drama and the international theatre in the 21st century. This year commemorates 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu, and this year also commemorates 110 years since the death of Henrik Johan Ibsen. Forty plays and seminars are scheduled in the programme, and Hiu Kok Drama Association's *A Doomed Bug* is also in the lowdown.

Organiser: Hong Kong Federation of Drama Societies

Web: www.10cdf.org.hk



"Spring Pop-up Shop" of Macao Fashion Gallery

Date: 29/1/2016-8/5/2016

Time: 10am-8pm (Closed on Mondays)

Venue: Macao Fashion Gallery
(47 Rua de S. Roque)

Organiser: Macao Productivity and Technology Transfer Center & Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao S.A.R. Government

Web: macaofashiongallery.com



Upside Down House

Date: 6/2/2016-22/7/2016

Time: 10am-6pm

Venue: Huashan 1914 Creative Park

Ticket: TW\$199

Organiser: Media Sphere Communications Ltd.

Web: www.huashan1914.com/exhibition/playing_detail.php?cate=&id=1608



"Wonderful Time" Exhibition by Cheong Sou Man

Date: 15/2/2016-29/5/2016

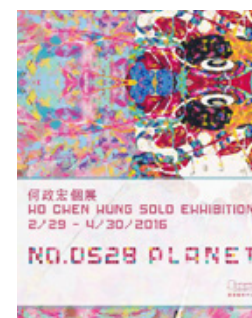
Time: 10:30am-6:30pm (Closed on Mondays)

Venue: 10 Fantasia

Ticket: Free

Organiser: 10 Fantasia & Creative Industries Promotion Association of St. Lazarus' Church District

Web: www.10fantasia.com



"NO.0528 Planet" Ho Chen Hung Solo Exhibition

Date: 29/2/2016-30/4/2016

Time: 10am-7pm

Venue: Flugent Art Gallery - Macau

Ticket: Free

Organiser: Flugent Art Gallery - Macau

Web: www.facebook.com/flugent



2015-2016 Intellectual Property Protection Writing Competition for Secondary Students

Deadline: Before 12:00am, 20/4/2016

Submission: Entry has to be submitted via email to w66685020@gmail.com

Organiser: Intellectual Property Association of Macau

Web: www.macaucci.com/cn/content/?id=9726&catid=63&subcatid=63



Dance "IN" Possible V:101

Date: 23/4/2016-24/4/2016

Time: 8pm

Venue: Studio Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Organiser: Y-Space

Web: www.y-space.org



Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education Course

Date: 30/4/2016-1/5/2016

Time: 2pm-6pm

Venue: Room H, 17/F, Praça Kin Heng Long, Macao

Fee: MOP1,500

Organiser: Macao Young Artists Association

Web: www.facebook.com/events/124203591304143



Asian Festival of Children's Content 2016

Date: 14/5/2016-3/6/2016

Time: 10am-9pm

Venue: Zone B1, National Library, Singapore

Ticket: Free

Organiser: Asian Festival of Children's Content

Web: afcc.com.sg



Recipient of Macao Literary Prize and Macao Novel Prize, Joe Tang is a writer and cultural commentator, and has published novels, including *The Floating City*, *Assassin*, and *The Lost Spirit*. The latter two titles were translated into English and Portuguese. Joe's portfolio also includes commentaries on art and plays. They include *Words from Thoughts*, *Philosopher's Stone*, *Journey to the West*, *Rock Lion*, *Magical Monkey* and *The Empress and the Legendary Heroes*.

Joe Tang

Catfish Effect

At the beginning of this year, TVMost, a Hong Kong online media, launched its 1st Guy Ten Big Ging Cook Gum Cook Awards Distribution, and it was a real blast. The show is an obvious satirical take on TVB's Jade Solid Gold Best Ten Music Awards Presentation. Not only is the production of high-quality, the show is also overflowing with creativity, and hence attracted thousands of netizens to watch the live broadcast or webcast. A number of cultural commentators and scholars have written articles about it. The show is not only an important event in the cultural sector, it has already become a cultural phenomenon.

In fact, similar programmes can also be found in the mainland. In 2009, a group of *jingpiao* (literally floating people in Beijing; the word refers to people from the outside seeking opportunities in Beijing) held an unprecedented event, "Shanzhai Chunwan", which name is a play on CCTV's Spring Festival Gala, commonly abbreviated in Chinese as Chunwan. First broadcast in 1983, Chunwan has possibly become the world's longest-running and the most-watched entertainment show, with the biggest ensemble cast. It used to be a must-watch show during Chinese New Year's Eve for every Chinese family in the mainland, and anyone who got a chance to perform in the show, it's a guarantee that he or she would shoot to stardom overnight. Songs and programmes played in the show would soon gain popularity all over the country. Therefore, for many years, the lowdown of the show and

who's going to appear in the show had become hottest talking points in the country.

Chunwan is an important and popular show, but at the same time it has become too predictable, thanks to its too-familiar formula of song and dance routines. In recent years, Chunwan has become one of the most hated shows in the mainland and its viewer numbers have dropped accordingly. Against the backdrop of this, the "Shanzhai Chunwan" held by a group of *jingpiao* has naturally stolen the limelight. According to the organisers' initial ideas, "Shanzhai Chunwan" would air simultaneously with the CCTV's Spring Festival Gala, and the target audiences are the working class, especially migrant workers and college students who were not able to go back home during the Chinese New Year. More importantly, the show uses "popular election" to design its programmes. Anyone who wants to be part of the programme is eligible to apply for it. *Southern Weekly*, a mainland newspaper, published a series of articles to discuss and document the intriguing development of "Shanzhai Chunwan". Get a copy of the newspaper and you will find out the details.

My point is, both "Shanzhai Chunwan" and the Guy Ten Big Ging Cook Gum Cook Awards Distribution point to one important thing that no one in the creative industry should ignore – the catfish effect. It is said that fishermen in Norway would put one catfish in the

tank so as to increase the level of activity to keep the sardines active instead of becoming sedentary. By doing so the chance of survival of the sardines during the long-distance transport would be higher.

Perhaps "destructive construction" is the *modus operandi* that suits the creative industry the best. As the society, economy and technology evolve from time to time, both the creatives and the management have to be innovative and proactive to response to changes. However, laziness is an inborn instinct. Once a company has got certain reputation and communication channels, it's not easy to drive away from such "model of success". Instead, the formula is copied again and again, and eventually becomes so out-of-touch. In fact, we shouldn't feel reluctant to spot catfish. Nor should we try to stay away from them. We should be happy that such "troublemakers" are there to challenge the status quo, and they are like a mirror, reflecting what is missing and substandard in reality.



Photo courtesy of 100Most



Supervisor of Audio-Visual CUT Association. One of the directors of *Macau Stories 1*, also involved in *Macau Stories 2 – Love in the City* and *Macau Stories 3 – City Maze*. *Macau Stories 2 – Love in the City* received a special mention at Portugal's Avanca Film Festival, and was shown at film festivals in Tokyo and Osaka.

Ho Ka Cheng

A Film's Triangular Relationships – Why Film Reviews Matter

On 30th January, 2016, a talk on "Film × Critique × Audience: A Film's Triangular Relationships" was held in The Cinematheque · Passion. Hong Kong film commentator Joyce Yang was invited to host the talk. I was lucky enough to be able to participate in it and have learnt so much from it. This also allowed me to think again what movie review is really about. And I hope that more people in Macao are able to take part in such discussion.

In general, both commercial film and art film are seen as filmmaking. And filmmaking is closely related to cinema studies and film review (as indicated in the diagram below). What most people usually see are commercial films, film reviews and film awards. Among them, film reviews are the most influential

in the general public and pop culture. Film commentators usually use theories in cinema studies to interpret films. Even the influence is subtle, every commentator somehow is disciple of certain theories.

"Film review" is a very generic term. It actually can be classified into four categories:

Screening report: It's like homework done by high school or university students. They discuss the theme and format of a film, and usually avoid having any subjective or personal comments.

Film review: The most popular form of article, such review is published in newspaper or film guide. Usually the writer assumes that the reader has not watched the film yet, and such article discloses plots and background of the film.

Theoretical essay: It's a doctoral dissertation-like essay and can even be published as a book. The essay contains in-depth discussion about one single film, or a series of film texts and their relations to socio-culture, politics, economy, philosophy and the film industry. Usually the writer assumes that the reader has equipped with enough knowledge about film genres, history, philosophy and the film industry.

Critical essay: It's a long essay about one

single film text, and it's something in between a film review and a theoretical article. The writer usually assumes that the reader is very familiar with the film. Plots of the film are not detailed in such essay. Instead, focus is given to certain scenes in a film, such as the lighting, how it is shot, the nuances of an actor's expression, directing techniques and traces of the filmmaker's works. The essay sometimes makes comparison of two or more film texts.

Most of the people are likely to see film review as an evaluation of a film. In fact, a film review has an interpreting function. Evaluation involves one's style and preference, but interpretation is to find out the meaning of a film. Some reviews/interpretations sometimes disclose the writer's own thoughts. They can be seen as literary work independent from film or film review.

Film reviews matter a lot to a country or a region as they have strong impact on the aesthetic values of a film and the ethos of a society. They further establish conceptions of culture and history. They proved to be useful to filmmakers too, allowing them to make references at the stage of inception, accumulate ideas and further improve their aesthetic skills. In the end, a film or its filmmaker is able to find its position in history.





Yi-Hsin Lin graduated from SOAS; now living in England as a writer. Lin has participated in the curation of Chinese painting in Victoria and Albert Museum and British Museum. He is also a lecturer in Chinese art at Christie's Education and contributes to several Chinese-language art magazines.

Yi-Hsin Lin

— The Lights of the City —

In spring this year, London was brightened up by a collection of spectacular nocturnal artworks. Classical yet avant-garde, this capital city looks even more splendid and colourful than it used to be. The first event that hit the city was Lumiere London. Artists from all over the world were invited to design this sound and light show, which incorporated landmarks and iconic streets of London. With millions of visitors attracted to the city over four evenings, Lumiere London is one of the most extraordinary public art shows since spring. Not long after this, Magical Lantern Festival was held in Chiswick House & Gardens in suburb London. The festival was held during the Chinese New Year, attracting flocks of visitors to catch a glimpse of the celebrations as well as the ginormous light installations. These two light shows not only attracted evening visitors to London, but also enhanced the beauty and reputation of the city.

Lumiere London

Prominent creative company Artichoke is the brain behind Lumiere London. It is the first time the festival of lights has been held in London. In 2009, Artichoke first held such event in Durham and it was highly acclaimed. Hence it's decided that the event had to be held in the capital city. This memorable festival was supported by the Mayor of London, and turned four districts, including Mayfair, King's Cross, Picaadilly, Regent Street, St James's, Trafalgar Square and Westminster, into massive exhibition venues. Taken into account the

ambience of the streets and buildings, each artist had to think out of the box to design these exquisite light installations, turning the city into a nocturnal delight. To ensure proper traffic flow and control, certain areas had to be cordoned off so as to allow visitors to view the illuminated art safely. So many people enjoyed the audio-visual feast of the Lumiere festival, as if the whole city of London was hosting a carnival.

Magical Lantern Festival

If Lumiere London is like a European-style party, Magical Lantern Festival is its eastern counterpart. Organised by Weli Creative, the festival was held in the classical Chiswick House and Gardens. The venue was filled with gigantic light installations, transforming it to a whimsical theme park. The most visually appealing sculpted lanterns are those with Chinese characteristics, including a ten-metre tall, lantern recreation of Beijing's Temple of Heaven, an eight-metre high Imperial Palace lantern, and a life-size terracotta army. To mark the Year of the Monkey, the centrepiece of the festival is the awe-inspiring Mount Huaguo lantern (a recreation of popular Chinese fable, *The Monkey King*). In fact, the lantern festival was an ancient festival attested as having been held as early as the year of 206 BC. Since then, the festival is held annually



during the Lunar New Year. The lanterns symbolise the return of spring, and people pray to the heaven for good harvests and a bright year ahead at this time of the year.

These kind of light shows have become fashionable in London in recent years. The organisers combined light installations with buildings and urban spaces, and a new form of art has been created. The light shows, no matter it's of a European-style carnival or a traditional festival in Asia, are guaranteed to attract an influx of visitors and give more business opportunities to retailers around the exhibition venues. The events, needless to say, will also dominate the headlines and become the hottest topic in town. The teams working behind the scenes grabbed the point that an evening exhibition allowed more people to see it after work, and hence can attract more potential visitors. This proved that as long as you are creative and smart, it's not difficult to pioneer new products and services, and expand the whole creative industry.



Yap loves design, travel and everything beautiful in life. He writes for various media about travel and design and has published works, including *Wander Bhutan* and *Myanmar Odyssey*. Formerly publisher of Lonely Planet (China Office), Yap is now Chief Content Officer of Youpu Apps, a Beijing-based travel app company.

Yap Seow Choong

— Taipei, the World Design Capital —

I have visited Taipei a few times recently and found that this city is getting more and more livable. I rented a Youbike and cycled through backstreets and alleys, just like what Taipeiers did. Bike lanes are nicely incorporated in the city planning so that roads are shared safely between drivers and cyclists. Sometimes, it's faster to reach your destination by cycling than taking MRT. Over the years, major cities in Europe have been endeavouring to build more pedestrian paths and bikeways for their residents, as more and more people believe that life is better without a car. Walking and cycling are one of ways to bring people back on the streets and give vibrancy to a city. Streetscape can be a source of inspiration, and the power of creativity a walker or cyclist gets from the street is definitely stronger than those smartphone addicts travelling in metro or other transportation.

This year, Taipei is appointed the World Design Capital by International Council of Societies of Industrial Design; and naturally this year becomes the city's year of design. Taipei successfully convinced the judging panel with its vision – an adaptive city that aims to pursue continual renewal and a better quality of life and overcome the constraints of limited resources by applying innovative design and planning.

Sustainable development is the trump card in the field of design. In Taipei, defunct warehouses are transformed into creative hubs (like Songshan and Huashan); old neighbourhoods are given new life by hipsters and alike; and some declining industries have seen a resurgence now. This kind of thoughtful revitalisation isn't just to get

rid of the old and welcome the new. It actually helps protect urban heritage. If old stuff is considered no longer useful today, think again. You can breathe new life into them.

There is a cluster of wholesales and hardware stores in the area of Taiyuan Street. Located in a hidden alley, Ri Xing Type Foundry is one of them. The popularisation of desktop publishing has replaced the traditional letterpress printing. The once important type foundries, therefore, have closed down. Founded in 1969, Ri Xing is now the only surviving type foundry in Taiwan. Books used to be made from letterpress printing. It's an act when the moveable types are inked and pressed against to paper and then an impression is created on the sheet. It's a slow yet enchanting process, and this is why this technique is no longer needed in the world that gives priority to rationality and efficiency. Ri Xing has kept the foundry's original structure, with an array of typefaces organised neatly, awaiting to be used again. The type casting machine imported from Japan looks like an antique, but it's still making beautiful typefaces with different sizes and fonts. Visitors now can take a tour of the foundry to know more about the letterpress printing process, and the typefaces can be taken away as souvenir. Here, the uniqueness of Chinese characters is given a refreshing look.

Walking northbound from the foundry and very soon you will arrive at Dihua Street, an area highly recommended by trendies. A historical area in Taipei, Dihua Street is where locals go for the Lunar New Year shopping. At first, my friends in Taipei were only willing to wander around the glitzy Eastern District.

Now they occasionally will visit the old area of Dihua Street. Amid the Chinese goods shops and herbal stores are some really cool shops merit a visit.

Dihua Street is located in Dadaocheng in western Taipei. Because of its proximity to Tamsui River, Dadaocheng used to be a busy port and was also the earliest district opened to foreigners in Taipei. Dihua Street is dotted with elaborate mansions that incorporated architectural styles of Southern China, the West and Japan. This is a proof of the heyday of the area. The city government of Taipei has renovated these houses, with an aim to revitalise this old area and to attract more visitors. Taipei City Urban Regeneration Office has set up Urban Regeneration Stations as a catalyser of innovative ideas. There are several such stations in the area of Dihua Street. Among them is URS127 Art Factory, a gallery especially for emerging artists to pilot experimental projects. Adjacent to it is ArtYard, a shop that is housed in an old building and sells locally designed products. You'll find a coffee shop and a teahouse inside the building, too. These are the space that can nurture creativity amid a relaxed environment.

A city is upgrading itself constantly. It's an art to re-arrange, upcycle or revitalise with the limited resources available. By doing it, the result is usually more appealing than simply making something totally new. By breathing new life to the old, the old also gives more layers of meaning to the new. The mix of old and new is more sophisticated than making a brand new start, and therefore can design an environment that encourages more creativity.



Japan-based writer and traveller, specialising in design, lifestyle and travel journalism. Ron previously served as an editor of *MING Magazine*, *ELLE Decoration* and *CREAM*.

Ron Lam

Backstreet Bookshops in Kyoto

Tsutaya Books has opened a branch near Heian Shrine in Kyoto. The bookshop is located in the former Kyoto Kaikan, a building designed by architect Maekawa Kunio. When this new branch first opened its doors, it soon became the talking point on the internet. Located in such a historic area, Tsutaya has a designated area that sells books about art in Kyoto and traditional craft, history and culture of Japan. I am not so excited about it and have no plan to make a visit there yet. It's probably because there are too many interesting independent bookshops in Kyoto to keep me busy.

One of them I frequented recently is Daiki Bookstore, which is located just off Gojo Dori. Run by an architect, Daiki's books revolve around the themes of architecture, photography and lifestyle. This tiny L-shaped space is divided into two parts: an office and a bookshop. The part that sells books is cubicle. The selection of books is small yet excellent. There are only two bookcases along the walls, but the books are enough for you to read the whole afternoon. If you are into the history of Japanese architecture and garden design, Daiki is where you should check out.

Another bookshop that I would recommend is Hohohoza at Shirakawa Dori. If you are a book lover and have visited Kyoto before, you may probably have heard of Gake Shobo, a bookshop located near Kyoto University of Art and Design and has the front end of a car poking out through a building as part of the store's decoration. The bookshop owner Yamashita Kenji is also the owner of Hohohoza. Last year, Yamashita closed Gake

Shobo down. He joined forces with his friend Matsumoto Shinya to operate Kotobayonet, and rented the ground floor of the old building where Kotobayonet was located. He combined the two spaces together and renamed it Hohohoza. The ground floor sells new books, while the first floor sells secondhand books and ceramic products, etc.

Yamashita applied the same business model to this new establishment. Hohohoza's specialty is its rich selection of locally published zines and knick-knacks made by young people. Apart from selling books and stuff, Hohohoza also functions as an independent publishing house. *The Day We Started a Coffee Shop*, the first book published by Hohohoza, is on display on the bookcase near the main entrance of the bookshop. The book consists of stories about coffee shops in Kyoto, as well as interviews with ladies who want to pursue a better life. Make a visit to Hohohoza, and you will see that it's a strong reminder of the power of self-publishing in Japan.

Seikosha is a bookshop founded last year by Horibe Atsusi, the former director of Keibunsha. It's located in a neighbourhood in the district of Kawaramachi Marutamachi. Horibe has a unique business approach for bookshops. When he took the helm of Keibunsha, he declined to follow the conventional procurement process. Refused to rely on distributors, Horibe contacted publishers directly instead. By

doing so not only the costs of purchasing books will be lower substantially, the types of books a bookshop gets are significantly more than getting from distributors. This is because distributors usually set aside the best-selling books for chain bookshops, which renders small bookshops difficult to compete with them. Horibe requested all employees took up the role of a buyer and selected books and stuff they wanted to be sold in the bookshop. Now having his own bookshop, Horibe is still ordering books directly from publishers.

Although chain bookshops boast a wider selection of books, they don't carry the warmth and welcoming ambiance that neighbourhood bookshops do. The future of bookshops in Japan is at risk. The number of bookshops in the whole country has fallen to 13,000, a quarter fewer than ten years ago. Interestingly enough, although bookshops are in decline, independent booksellers are popping up. Maybe what Horibe said is true: backstreet bookshops will survive so long as there is a new way out, and they will continue to support to our community.



An accountant by profession, Ashley is member of several anime and comics associations in Macao. She started writing fiction, illustrated and drew the comic strip of *Macao Daily* in the early 1990s. Later on she took the role of comics writer, and she is now the managing editor of *MIND²*, a comics magazine published by Comic's Kingdom. Ashley also participates in organising the Macao Animation, Comic and Toy Expo, an event run by Macao Animation & Comic Alliance.

Ashley Chong

What's Next for the Anime and Comics Industry in Macao?

About three or four decades ago, parents and teachers believed that comic books and cartoons were bad for kids. It is until several years ago that people started having a different perspective on anime and comics, thanks to the relevant policies carried out at the national and regional levels. Now, anime and comics are part of the creative industries, and a governmental department is set up to oversee the development of the sector in Macao. The society, accordingly, also started to rethink what anime and comics actually are. For a certain period of time, local anime and comics associations have become very popular partners in various trade shows.

In fact, the anime and comics industry has gained a firm foothold in many countries and regions. Anime and comic books have expanded in such a way that they have been made into by products and generated huge revenues. This business model is already very well-known and some countries have invested significantly in this industry, expecting a long-term economic growth from it. For instances, cities in the mainland regularly hold large-scale comic and anime festivals with steady support from local governments. Despite the quality is not up to par yet, it at least helps promote

the whole industry and attracts international attention.

Macao is tiny, but with the support of technology and the internet, as well as relevant policies, the anime and comics industry in Macao is no longer rewardless. Apart from a series of new book releases and exhibitions, you can easily find locally created anime or comic characters in everyday life: stationery, clothing, articles of daily use, dolls, accessories, souvenirs and even thematic restaurants. Some governmental departments also like using such characters to promote policies or festive events, and gaming conglomerates have also commissioned local comic artists to design promotional leaflets for them. Comics contest is a popular choice for local associations when organising activities, as it is pretty straightforward. Educational institutions with clear-sighted vision have started offering relevant professional training courses to groom talent. With the subsidies provided by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, some associations also started offering fundamental courses on anime and comics, but very often there aren't enough qualified instructors to teach the courses. The once small-scale *Doujinshi* (Japanese term for self-published works, usually



magazines, comics or novels) activities, after years of effort, have now become signature events. Conferences and expos with related themes are popping up. Although enhancement is needed and its impact is yet to be seen, the progress made so far is a significant step towards industrialisation.

With such a rosy picture, let's

have a look what is happening in reality. Macao is a small open economy and there is only one industry that is really thriving here. We have made reference to the best practices overseas, too. But given the size of Macao, even if we have all infrastructure ready, it's still difficult to fly high.

It's also difficult to change how people think even the policy has changed. Some people still think that anime and comics are all about cosplay, an activity that only teenagers are interested in it. Anime fans in Macao possess high purchasing power but they much prefer foreign productions and products. Even if you have a good business idea, it's unlikely to work in Macao because the market is small and rent is high. And there is a shortage of talent and manpower. This is why an anime-themed restaurant can't really be loyal to its original positioning. Now most of the anime and comic artists in Macao are amateurs. If you don't have a full-time job, it's impossible to finance this hobby. Even a comic book is published, sales and marketing is a pain. If an exhibition is going to be held or a study tour is organised, artists involved have to undertake a large amount of administration-related work. Even if an individual artwork is excellent, due to the small number of productions and the amount of time needed to make them, the overall growth is slow. The cost of organising anime and comics expos is high, and governmental subsidies are never enough to cover the expenses.

Industrialisation of the anime and comics industry in Macao is the right way out. It's a long way to go though, and it's not possible to get a goose that laid the golden eggs anytime soon. It's not an easy path, but I believe that people in the industry will go forward steadfastly.



Cheong Sio Pang

A full time researcher in university and an amateur art commentator, Cheong obtained his master's degree in Public Policy at Willy Brandt School of Public Policy at the University of Erfurt and is formerly a clarinettist of the Erfurt Philharmonic Orchestra in Germany. He loves classical music and now serves as conductor of the orchestra in Escola Choi Nong Chi Tai, by which he can connect art to everyday life. Cheong is also a book lover.

—A Castrated Voice—

Organised by the Alliance Francaise, the inaugural Macao Sacred Music Festival featured the performance of counter-tenor Sébastien Fournier, and the Macao Orchestra showcased works by M.A. Charpentier, Handel and Mozart under the baton of Lio Kuok Man, a Macao-born musician and assistant conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The architectural design of St Dominic's Church, with its grand, elongated space and high ceiling, enhanced the music with its excellent acoustics. However, the audience seated at the back might enjoy a less appealing sound due to the difficulty in sound projection. By comparison, the architectural design of St Joseph's Seminary and Church poses less limitation as such. With a more accessible location, St Dominic's Church attracts tourists and visitors who attend the concerts out of curiosity, but such church visitors are generally less aware of the protocol at concerts and some of them would even leave the concert halfway through. Moreover, since the organiser did not mention that photographs are prohibited, there were quite a lot of visitors in the audience taking snapshots with their mobile phones during the concert. On top of this, the lighting inside the venue was not dimmed until the show went on for some time. Fortunately, the organiser became aware of this situation and dimmed the lighting eventually. This gesture certainly helped the audience stay focused during the concert.

As a first-time organiser of this event,

Alliance Francaise has showcased the rare gem of a counter-tenor musician in Macao. The press release they provided rather inaccurately called Fournier a male tenor. The term counter-tenor can be understood as the highest male tenor. Or, sometimes it is also called a falsetto or a male alto. In terms of music jargon, it means that the male singer adopts a falsetto to perform the singing range of a soprano. Therefore, the definition for a male counter-tenor is still subject to interpretation. However, the most widely-accepted term is that of a male falsetto. From a historical point of view, the diminishing of male falsetto singers is related to the castration of singers during the 16th century. In order to preserve a childlike, high-pitched voice, many male tenors underwent castration, a surgery that helped them retain the clarity of voice. The famous musician, Nicola Porpora, was known for his success in discovering many talented male tenor performers, including the famous musician, Farinelli, who was castrated by his brother. Allegedly, Farinelli's brother helped to "take care of" Farinelli's own wife. To learn more about Farinelli's life, one must watch *Farinelli*, the film about his life.

At this concert, a substantial range of works by Handel was covered, including *Dover Giustizia*. As a result of the prolonged performance of the vocalist, the concluding tenor seemed rather weak. Despite the similarity in pitch

shared between a male counter-tenor and a female soprano, the rendering of their voices are quite different: while a male counter-tenor is not as shrill as a soprano, it often feels more approachable and steady. Under the baton of Lio Kuok Man, the Macao Orchestra performed with much poise, and the baroque music was well-articulated. In Handel's *Water music HWV 349 Suite No. 2 in D major*, the trumpet appeared less satisfactory. Nevertheless, the artistic merit of the concert is considerable. In fact, it is worth watching the Macao Orchestra led by Lio, even if one is simply interested in the counter-tenor, which is so rarely found nowadays. Moreover, it is an exciting opportunity to listen to orchestral music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods (the orchestra also performed a piece by Mozart). Let us hope that the Alliance Francaise will continue to host this Sacred Music Festival, bringing us more classical music in Macao and diversifying people's taste for different types of music.



Counter-tenor Sébastien Fournier. Photo courtesy of Jean Matève.